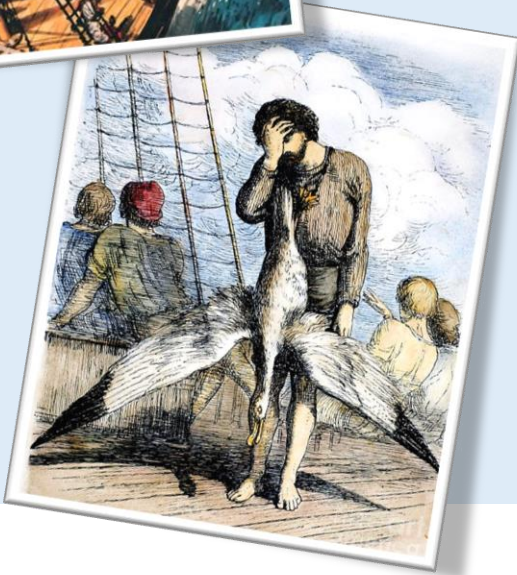




Is our savage treatment of animals like the curse of the albatross on our modern civilisation?

The idiom ‘albatross around one’s neck’ refers to a heavy burden someone carries around incessantly.

It comes from the 18th-century poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge “*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*” in which a sailor is thought to have brought a curse upon himself and his crew by needlessly shooting a friendly albatross.



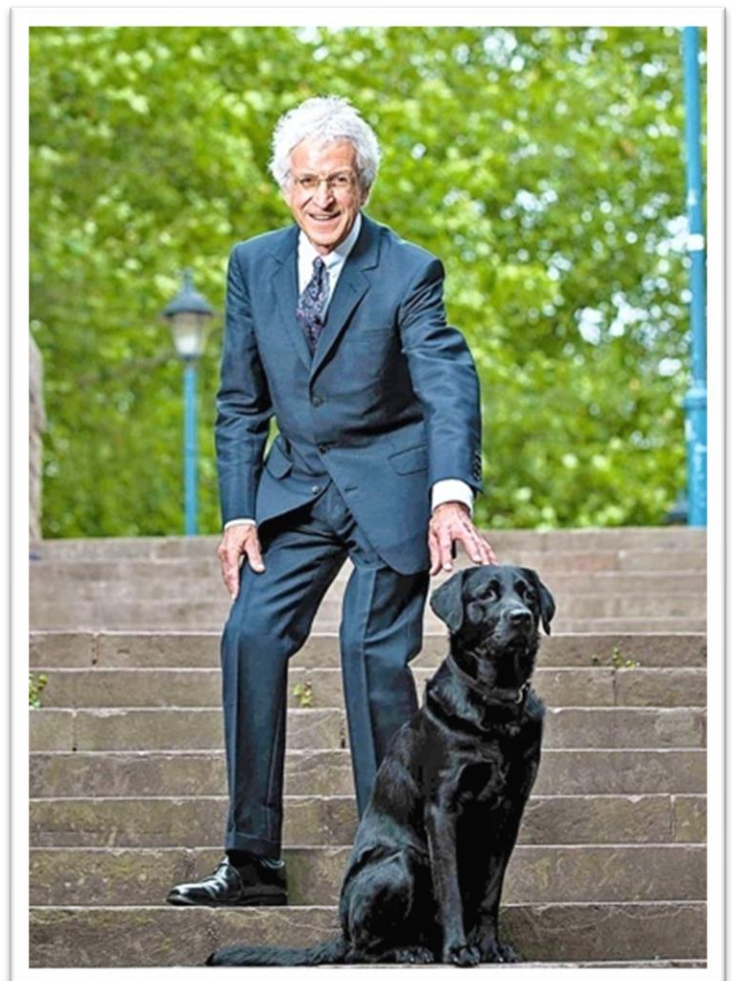
As the wind stopped blowing and the ship was becalmed in mid-ocean, the albatross became a symbol of the mariner’s burden and regret.

Some people believe that our treatment of animals is the albatross that will continue to burden our civilisation through loss of moral integrity and climate change, until we make amends.

If we treated animals well, all of society would benefit

British barrister, author and poet Noël Sweeney believes that real change in the status and role of animals in society can only be achieved through legislation. The way we treat animals, he believes, stems from our inherent nature as humans to take advantage of the powerless and treat them with different forms of cruelty.

“So, if we’re talking about the white plantation owner, he treated the slave badly. If we’re talking about a man in a position of control over a woman, he will treat her badly and, in turn, they will treat the children badly. It’s about taking advantage of the vulnerable. The members of society that everyone takes advantage of, are the animals because they have no vote, no voice, no resistance against the power and the propensity for savagery that is inherent in us. This is why we need laws to suppress this propensity and keep society decent.”



Sweeney says that to gain perspective on just how impactful legislation can be, we need only to look back in time.

- Just over 100 years ago, women in England had very few legal rights and once they got married, all their property became that of their husbands.
- Less than 80 years ago the supreme court in Massachusetts, USA, tackled the issue of a jury member having to be a 'person'. The judges, all men, had to decide whether a woman was a person. They decided she was not.
- In another case, also in America, a decision had to be taken as to whether a non-white person could testify against a white American. They decided 'no'.
- Not that long ago, placards in a newsagents' windows, in landladies' windows, said 'no coloureds, no dogs, no Irish'.

*"But legislation has changed all of this in a relatively short space of time. Nowadays we have the Race Relations Act, we have the Sex Discrimination Act. We have people to protect those who are insane, those who are old, those who are children. We have protection for every single vulnerable group that exists – except for the animals. They are the under-dog's underdog. The crucial question that all society must answer is this: **Why do we treat animals the way we do?** And the answer is: because we are all conspirators, and we take advantage of animals because we can."*

"Think about it: if we changed the law and gave animals rights, we would have to ask, for example: who is going to fill my belly? It is so much easier for us to remain as conspirators."

Sweeney suggests that a political party for animals is the way to progress for the animals.

"Through a political party society could begin to introduce the real mechanism, the real instrument for change in our world, namely legislation."

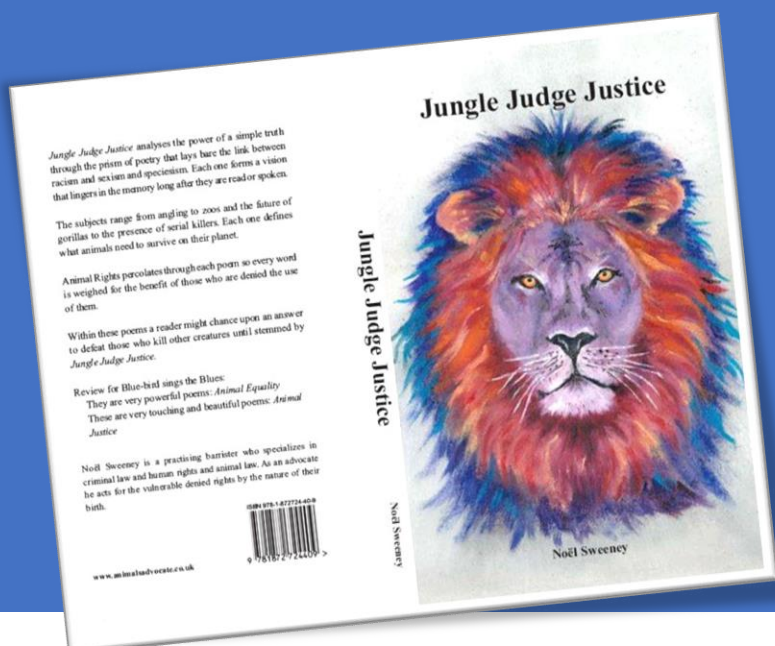
He cautions against accepting animal welfare provisions as opposed to animal rights.

"Animal welfare results in bigger cages so they have more room to move. Animal rights means they have the right to life and legal status and this will compel people to start considering that animals have feelings; that they have pain."

If we treated animals well, all of society would benefit. If we treated animals kindly, children would be brought up to see animals simply as different species, no more and no less entitled to life. Every action we take, is one step closer. We must speak for the powerless who have no human tongue."

See: www.animalsadvocate.co.uk

Order your own copy of Noël Sweeney's just released book of poems *Jungle Judge Justice*, the theme of which analyses the connection between racism, sexism and speciesism.



Also by Noël Sweeney:

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